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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000267

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SUBJECT: Gagauzia Facing 3-Way Legislative Race on March 16

Classified By: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A March 3 pre-electoral visit to Gagauzia found the administration still scrambling to solve the problem of funding the March 16 elections for the Gagauz People's Assembly. Gagauz Governor (Bashkan) Mikhail Formuzal hoped to prove to the population that Gagauzia could solve its problems with out the Communist Party (PCRM), while charging that Chisinau wanted him to fail. Comrat Mayor Nicolai Dodoglu spoke at length about his rivalry with Formuzal, complaining that their split strengthened the hand of the Communist Party. The Central Electoral Commission is mostly concerned about funding, and whether the money would be found in time for the elections.  
End Summary.

12. (C) In a pre-election visit to Gagauzia on March 3, Ambassador Kirby met with Bashkan Formuzal, Mayor Dodoglu, Central Electoral Commission Chief Pyotr Ivanov, and representatives of civil society. These interlocutors described a three-way race for the upcoming parliamentary elections on March 16, between supporters of Formuzal, Dodoglu and the Communist Party, while predicting a weakening of support for the Communists.

Formuzal Thinks Central Government Wants Him to Fail  
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13. (C) Gagauzia's leader, Bashkan Mikhail Formuzal, assured the Ambassador that funding would be found to carry out the March 16 elections. He told the Ambassador that his aim was to show the population that Gagauzia could resolve its problems with the Communists and with Chisinau. Formuzal said that since his election he had provided political stability, managed the budget and carried out real reform. He praised his own successes, noting that even non-Gagauz villages in the Vulcanesti area were asking to become part of Gagauzia.

14. (C) However, Formuzal complained that the leadership in Chisinau viewed him as an enemy to be destroyed. Formuzal believed his effective leadership was dangerous to the Communist Party. Chisinau, Formuzal noted, created situations designed to make him look bad, such as not permitting Russia's humanitarian aid to be delivered to Comrat.

15. (C) Formuzal complained that the central government was trying to make him responsible for debt that he had not created. They wanted him to repay 28 million lei (USD 2.5 million) of 2006 debt accrued under the previous governor. The Bashkan claimed that the Ministry of Finance wanted to paralyze the Gagauz leadership by taking 28 million lei from its current budget to pay the debt rather than letting Gagauzia pay it back over time.

16. (C) Formuzal reported that Chisinau was actively campaigning in support of the PCRM candidates, using central government resources to build support. Ministers and other government figures were campaigning for PCRM candidates. Formuzal predicted that the Communists would win a minority share of the vote, and thus lose control the Gagauz parliament. He expected a parliament of largely independent candidates among whom he would have to form a working majority.

## Dodoglu Focused on his Rivalry against Formuzal

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¶17. (C) Comrat Mayor Dodoglu described the parliamentary elections as a three-way race between himself, the Bashkan, and the communists. According to Dodoglu, thirty of the candidates (out of a total of 160 in 35 constituencies) supported him. He expected that at least fifty percent of the population would participate in the elections.

¶18. (C) Dodoglu criticized the way Formuzal handled relations between the two, starting immediately after the December 2006 Bashkan elections. Dodoglu had, he said, swallowed his pride to congratulate his rival, but Formuzal had not even invited him to the inauguration. A bitter Dodoglu complained that Formuzal had isolated himself and could not get a majority. He lamented that the Gagauz government did not represent all of Gagauzia.

¶19. (C) Dodoglu confirmed that President Voronin, Speaker Lupu and various deputies visited Gagauzia regularly to support PCRM candidates, and argued that the split between Formuzal and Dodoglu strengthened their hand. Dodoglu believed that the population was disappointed with Formuzal's leadership. Instead of fighting the Communists, Formuzal was busy fighting Dodoglu.

## CEC Still Needs Funding

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¶10. (C) Central Electoral Commission Chairman Pyotr Ivanov focused predominantly on his problems in securing necessary funding for the elections. He said that the CEC had received 800,000 of the 1,200,000 lei needed for the conduct of the elections (600,000 from the People's Assembly and 200,000 from the Gagauz executive branch). Money still was needed to pay the salaries of the CEC members and for

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electoral workers. Ivanov said that the CEC was printing ballots, but had insufficient money to pay for all the ballots.

## Comment

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¶11. (C) The key political issue at stake in the upcoming Gagauz parliamentary elections is whether the Communists will retain their hold on the Gagauz People's Assembly. The rivalry between Formuzal and Dodoglu is not ideological, but instead represents a difference in personalities. Civil society representatives believed that the PCRM's popularity was dropping in Gagauzia. If Formuzal's supporters do not win a majority in the parliament, Formuzal's challenge will be to build a working coalition with Dodoglu supporters or a modus vivendi with the PCRM. End Comment.

KIRBY